

About the Master Gardener Volunteer Program

The Michigan Master Gardener Program is a horticulture education and volunteer leader training program offered by Michigan State University Extension. The program originated in the state of Washington in 1972, and is now offered in approximately 46 states and Canada. The first program held in Michigan was conducted in 1978. Since then, approximately 57 counties have offered the course in one or more years, with a total of over 18,000 participants.

It provides home gardening information to Bay County citizens through a network of trained volunteers. An interest in gardening, home horticulture, a personal commitment to volunteering, and an enthusiasm for sharing knowledge with others are the only prerequisites.

Mission

The Master Gardener volunteer program serves two major and equal functions:

- To provide instruction in basic horticulture science to motivated and active gardeners through an adult educational program offered through Michigan State University Extension.
- To provide MSU Extension - Bay County with trained volunteers committed to responding to the demands for gardening information, advice, and assistance through community service projects.

Educational Requirement

The Master Gardener classes meet for a minimum of eleven weeks. Extension educators, other specialists, and local gardening experts teach the classes. Trainees work from a 700-page Master Gardener core manual. Training materials are covered in the course fee. The course provides a basic overview of major horticultural subjects, while introducing the students to a variety of resources for future reference. Topics covered in the eleven basic class sessions include:

- Introduction to Plant Science
- Soils for Plant Growth
- Household Pest and Wildlife
- Indoor Plant Care
- Plant Health (IPM)
- Lawn Care
- Growing Small Fruits
- Growing Tree Fruits
- Vegetable Gardening
- Woody Ornamentals
- There will also be session on water quality and volunteering.

For more details on upcoming classes, see the current year project list, get information on course fees for the Master Gardener Volunteer Program in Bay County, or find other valuable horticulture links, visit

www.baycounty-mi.gov/MSUE/MasterGardener

or call Jan Rise, Master Gardener Volunteer Program coordinator, at (989) 895-2031.

Volunteer Commitment

The volunteer component of the Master Gardener program takes the Master Gardener trainee out into the community to educate others through a variety of horticulture-related activities.

The Master Gardener training course consists of a minimum of 40 hours of instruction. An equivalent number of community service hours are required to become a certified Master Gardener. Half of these hours must be spent on Extension-sponsored projects. Examples include: working at an information table at various Bay County libraries, staffing an information booth at other county locations and community events, and developing educational materials.

Bay County Master Gardener trainees also have the opportunity to work at MDOT's I-75 Linwood rest stop and act as docents for the Bay City Garden Club's annual garden walk.

Other hours may be given to activities related to horticulture in the community. Some examples include: designing and planting community beautification projects, working with youth to create a school garden, using horticultural therapy with the disabled and elderly, or setting up garden programs in homes for battered women.

Michigan State University Extension

MSU Extension is a diversified educational, high technology organization serving residents throughout the county and Michigan. MSU is Michigan's "land grant" university which has the special charge of bringing research from campus to local communities for practical application to the needs of local individuals, communities, and government.

Extension is cooperatively funded by four major funding partners: the United States Department of Agriculture, the state of Michigan, local county government, and other cooperating agencies. Federal funding links Extension to national trends and issues affecting Michigan communities. State funding ensures that the needs of Michigan citizens are being met. Local funding means that Extension is in place to deal with the needs and issues in every county. Extension programs are very cost effective. They involve volunteers and community leaders who bring special expertise and knowledge to Extension programming to address our community's needs.

Michigan State University Extension - Bay County holds leadership positions in its major program areas: Agriculture and Natural Resources; Children, Youth, Family and Communities Programs; and Community and Economic Development.

For More Information

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